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# BAKER'S EDITION OF PLAYS

# TRYING IT ON BELDON

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# TRYING IT ON BELDON.

Library

## CHARACTERS.

MR. BELDON, *who has no faith in doctors.*

OLIVER BELDON, *who is not strong.*

JACK PHELPS, *Jessie's young man, a medical student just about to graduate.*

DR. KNOWITALL, *who has a great opinion of himself.*

DR. FUSSY, *who is nervous and fidgety.*

DR. SMOOTHINGTON, *who never gets out of temper.*

DR. MERRYBONE, *who enjoys a good joke, even though it be against himself.*

MRS. MARIA BELDON, *who is always ailing.*

AUNT SOPHRONIA, *who is never quite well.*

JESSIE BELDON, *the only healthy member of the family.*

CILLY, *the servant, who has poor days, but who is, nevertheless, an indefatigable duster.*

## PROPERTIES.

Tastefully-furnished sitting-room, with table, chairs, easy chair, sofa pillows, books, check-book, pen and ink, pamphlet, bottles of medicines, and white cloths.

## COSTUMES.

Modern. Make the doctors look as comical as possible.

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# Trying It On Beldon.

## ACT I.

*SCENE.—Tastefully furnished sitting-room in Mr. Beldon's home. Door,* R., *leading to hall. Door,* L., *to kitchen and dining-room. Window at back. Enter* MR. BELDON, R.

MR. BELDON (*with a disgusted air*). Here I am, home for a week, probably. I wish Perkins and the others hadn't backed out about going camping for a few days. I wanted to go, but should hardly care to try it alone. Yet a vacation in the house is not exactly what I bargained for. How I am going to stand it, I don't know. I hear enough nights and mornings of the imaginary ailments of this family without having to endure it all day. It's a grunt or a groan from one or the other all the time. There's Maria, who is always ailing; Aunt Sophronia is never quite well; my son Oliver is not strong; while even Priscilla, the servant, has more poor days than good ones. If I thought they were really ill, I should feel sorry for them, but it's my belief that they just mope around the house and worry over their little ailments until they assume gigantic proportions. They are constantly running to doctors, and constantly taking medicine. If they would go out every day and take a dose of pure air, I'm sure that their complaints would vanish like the dew. But they're all afraid of catching cold — that is, all but Jessie, dear girl! who is the only healthy one among them. You don't catch her moping in the house. No, indeed, she knows what is good for her — of course, so far as her health is concerned. I can't say she shows much taste when she lets that young medical student hang around her all the



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time. But he might as well stay away. I'll never consent to her having him. Good gracious! I see and hear enough of doctors without taking one right into the family, and that ends it. Well (*throwing himself into the easy chair*), how am I going to pass away the time? I'd like to do something new and strange. I have it! I'll try it myself! (*Laughing.*) *I'll* be sick. Instead of waiting on them, I'll let them wait on me. Instead of listening to their complaints I'll let them listen to mine. Perhaps I'll be able to make them forget themselves for a few days. Perhaps I'll succeed in curing their little ailments. (*Laughing harder.*) What a joke it will be.

*Enter* MRS. BELDON, L. *She starts at seeing her husband, who makes a long face and settles wearily in the easy chair.*

MRS. B. John, what are you doing home so early in the day? Why (*looking at him closer*), are you ill? What is the matter with you?

MR. B. (*sighing*). That is what I should like somebody to tell me.

MRS. B. (*alarmed*). You've been catching cold, or maybe got some dreadful disease down in that stuffy office. At any rate, whatever it is, a dose of Brown's Unequalled Compound will do you a world of good.

MR. B. (*starting up*). Maria, I will not —

MRS. B. Yes, you will, my dear. Think I'm going to let you take your bed right on my hands and do nothing for you? No, indeed. (*Aside.*) I'll telephone for Dr. Knowitall, too, and John will have to have him whether he wants him or not. Dear! dear! and me as miserable as I can be myself. (*Exit,* R.)

MR. B. Disagreeable medicines were not in the scheme. It never occurred to me that I'd have to take them. I just meant to be waited on and be attended to. Well, I suppose I shall have to grin and bear it this once, now that I've started in.

*Enter* OLIVER, R.

OLIVER (*with a languid air*). Why, Pa! what's the matter? You on the sick list, too? That's a pity. I'm

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not feeling very strong myself to-day, but it's unusual for you to have anything the matter with you. (MR. BELDON *groans.*) Pain, eh? Rheumatism, I suppose.

*Enter* AUNT SOPHRONIA, L.

AUNT SOPHRONIA (*in surprise*). John, what are you doing here so early in the day, and looking so glum, too?

OLI. Pa's sick this afternoon, Aunt Sophronia. He had to come home. Seems to be in pain. (*Aside.*) I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to telephone for Dr. Fussy. Pa just hates doctors, but he's got to have one now, whether he wants him or not. (*Exit,* R.)

AUNT S. Where do you feel the worst, John?

MR. B. I couldn't tell you, Sophronia. I have the same feeling all over me.

AUNT S. Strange! very strange! Why, you seemed all right at breakfast. Did this come on suddenly?

MR. B. Very suddenly.

AUNT S. Dear me! something will have to be done for you. I must say, too, that you don't look very comfortable. (*Brings sofa pillows, which she has some difficulty in adjusting behind* MR. BELDON'S *head, at the same time making his hair disorderly.* MR BELDON *groans several times.*)

AUNT S. (*aside, as she goes toward the door at* R.). This is positively alarming. I'm afraid he's going to have a sick spell, and me hardly in a condition to nurse him. Well, we must find out at once what it means. I'm going to send for Dr. Smoothington and not say a word about it. The others might object if I did, and Dr. Smoothington is certainly the best doctor in the place. And while I'm waiting for him I'm going to give John a dose of Cure-you-sure. It's bound to help him, no matter what he has. (*Exit,* R.)

MR. B. I wonder what Sophronia is up to now. She went out with a very determined look on her face. I hope she hasn't gone for her favorite medicine, too.

*Enter* MRS. BELDON, R., *with a bottle and tablespoon.*

MRS. B. Now, dear, you take —

MR. B. (*deprecatingly*). Maria, spare me. That stuff cannot possibly do me a bit of good.

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MRS. B. (*decidedly*). It will, and you must take it. (*Pours out tablespoonful of medicine and makes him swallow it.*)

MR. B. (*with wry face*). What's the sense of giving a man such stuff as that? It's worse than sickness itself.

MRS. B. It may taste disagreeable, but it certainly will benefit you. Now try to forget it. Here, let me make you comfortable. (*Fixes the pillows in several positions before she is suited. While doing so, she gets* MR. BELDON'S *hair still more disorderly.*)

*Enter* CILLY, L., *with cloth duster in hand.*

CILLY (*in surprise*). Oh, sir, what is the matter?

MRS. B. He has come home with some dreadful complaint. I'm sure I don't know what.

CIL. Worn-out, likely. Been working too hard. I'll tell you what, sir. If you will take Longgreen's Bound-to-build-you-up-quick-as-wink, you'll be a well man in no time. I've got a bottle handy, too. (*Exit*, L., *hurriedly.*)

*Enter* JACK *and* JESSIE, R., *in out-of-door costumes.*

JACK. Good afternoon.

MRS. B. Good afternoon.

JESSIE (*going to her father*). Why, Pa! what's the trouble? You're never home at this time of day. And (*laughing*) you certainly look as if Melancholy had marked you for her own.

MR. B. (*shaking his head*). I'm afraid she has.

MRS. B. (*severely*). Don't laugh, child; your father is very sick indeed, and yet it is all I can do to get him to take a little medicine.

JES. (*going off into another hearty laugh*). But I can't help it — he looks so funny. Is he really sick, though? and if he is, why don't you send for the doctor and find out what he needs? That stuff may not be good for him?

MR. B. Doctor, indeed! I'll have none of him.

JACK. If I could be of any assistance, sir —

MR. B. But you can't, you see. I won't be doctored. It's my belief that we're all better off without the doctors. Anyway, if I had a doctor, I'd want a full-fledged one, not one just out of the shell.

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*Enter* CILLY, L., *with pamphlet, bottle and spoon, also duster.*

CIL. (*reading from pamphlet*). Have you a pain in the back, a dull, aching sensation all over your body, a feeling that life is not worth living, an almost insane desire to commit suicide, a feeling that your friends have turned against you, then take Longgreen's Bound-to-build-you-up-quick-as-wink. A tablespoonful every half hour. Why, sir, I could read you yards and yards of unsolicited testimonials about this here medicine if I had the time, but I hain't, so I'll leave them for you to read yourself. (*Puts bottle, spoon and pamphlet on table; aside.*) Pity, now, that this is one of my poor days. (*Exit,* L., *after dusting some of the furniture.*)

*Enter* OLIVER, R., *with box of pills.*

OLI. Now, Pa, if you'll just take one of these pills, I'm sure you won't regret it. They're Quackery's Make-you-well-in-a-jiffy pills, and are recommended by all the leading physicians.

MR. B. (*groaning*). Much obliged, my son, but please take them away. I hardly think I need quite so much medicine.

MRS. B. Yes, take them away. I shall continue to give him the Compound every ten minutes, and that is sufficient.

(MR. BELDON *shakes his head sadly.*)

JES. But, Ma, that might be injuring Pa.

MRS. B. Don't talk so loud, Jessie. Remember that your father is ill. Besides, I'm not well myself to-day.

*Enter* AUNT SOPHRONIA, *with bottle, which she sets on table.*

AUNT S. And I, too, feel an unaccountable weakness this afternoon. (*Aside.*) I think I'll take a dose when I give it to John.

JES. I'll tell you what, if you'll all come out and take a walk you'll feel better. Why, it's glorious! Trees are blooming, birds are singing, pretty flowers have sprung up along the wayside; indeed, all nature invites you to come and enjoy yourselves, and yet you remain indoors.

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MRS. B. (*sternly*). Child, have you no sympathy for anybody?

JES. Yes, and that is why I want you to come out and be benefitted. Come, feel what I have felt; come, see what I have seen. I don't mean Pa, of course; he does take plenty of fresh air when he's well, but the rest of you seem to be afraid to look outside.

MRS. B. Be quiet, Jessie. (*To* MR. BELDON.) Now, John, it's my opinion that the very best thing you can do is to go up to your room and lie down.

MR. B. (*rising*). I think I will, Maria. (*Aside.*) It will be something to get away by myself. I wish it was just as easy to get out of this scrape. (*Exit*, R.)

AUNT S. (*aside*). I wonder how soon that doctor will come.

OLI. (*aside*). It seems to me that the doctor ought to be here.

MRS. B. Unbeknown to John, I have sent for Dr. Knowitall.

AUNT S. and OLI. (*in dismay*). You have?

MRS. B. Well, why not? Don't you think he ought to have a doctor?

AUNT S. Yes, Maria, I thought so, and that is why I sent for Dr. Smoothington.

MRS. B. and OLI. Dr. Smoothington!

AUNT S. Yes. Dr. Smoothington, though a comparative stranger, has already won the confidence of the people in this place.

OLI. Well, I don't know about him, but I sent for Dr. Fussy.

MRS. B. and AUNT S. Dr. Fussy!

OLI. Yes, why not? He's the best physician in town. Of course, I hadn't any idea that the whole family had been sending for a doctor.

*Enter* CILLY, L., *with duster, which she uses as she talks.*

CIL. I wanted to tell you, ma'am, that I took it upon myself to send for Dr. Merrybone for Mr. Beldon. I thought the rest of you would be that upset that you'd forget to do it. Dr. Merrybone is a good doctor, ma'am, and so jolly. Why, the jokes of him are enough to make

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a body well. I should think he'd be here any minute now. (*Exit, hurriedly.*)

(*Consternation on all their faces.*)

MRS. B. Well, well, now we are in a fix.
AUNT S. I should think so.
OLI. What are we going to do?
JES. I'll tell you. Telephone for all of them to stay away, all but —
MRS. B. Dr. Knowitall.
AUNT S. Dr. Smoothington.
OLI. Dr. Fussy.

*Exit, in a hurry,* MRS. BELDON, AUNT SOPHRONIA *and* OLIVER, R.

JACK. I wonder how they are going to settle it.
JES. I don't know, I'm sure, but it's probably too late to do anything about it. (*Smiling.*) I think they will have to let them all come and have a consultation. But, really, Jack, I don't believe that Pa needs any doctor. I'm glad that I didn't send for one, any way. If I had, it would have been you, and then Pa would have sent you off.
JACK. Jessie.
JES. Well, Jack?
JACK. Do you know what your father said to me?
JES. Yes, that he would never consent to my marrying a doctor. He told me that, too. But, Jack, I would never consent to marry any one except —
JACK. Except —
JES. A doctor.
JACK. *A* doctor, Jessie?
JES. Well, the doctor.
JACK. *The* doctor?
JES. Oh, Jack! how particular you are! What do you want me to say?
JACK. You see, Jessie, *a* doctor and *the* doctor may mean almost any doctor, while *this* doctor (*pointing to himself*), makes it all right.
JES. (*shyly*). Well, this doctor, then.

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JACK (*attempting to take her hand*). Jessie, you're a darling!

JES. (*moving away from him*). Be careful, Jack, somebody may come. Besides, until Pa consents, I cannot allow you to say such things.

JACK. Say, Jessie.

JES. Well, Jack?

JACK. Don't you care?

JES. Of course, I do.

JACK (*gloomily*). You don't act like it.

JES. Well, I'm hoping, you see, that it will come out all right.

JACK. How can it?

JES. Jack, Pa's not really heartless, and if —

JACK (*brightening*). If I tried him again? I'll do it.

(*Loud ring at bell. Enter* MRS. BELDON, AUNT SOPHRONIA, *and* OLIVER, *all rushing, and all excited.*)

MRS. B. If it should be the doctor!

AUNT S. If it should be two doctors!

OLI. If it should be three doctors!

JES. (*jokingly*). If it should be four doctors!

(*Fire bell heard outside. Enter, running,* MR. BELDON *in dressing-gown, one slipper, and one shoe.*)

MR. B. (*in great excitement*). That's a fire! Where's my hat?

(*The others look frightened.* MRS. BELDON *grabs* MR. BELDON *by the arm.*)

MRS. B. You go right back to your room. You're in a pretty condition to run to a fire.

MR. B. Has it come to this? A prisoner in my own house? (*Exit,* R.)

AUNT S. Has the man gone crazy?

MRS. B. Crazy? Not a bit of it. Don't you know that nine men out of ten forget everything else when they hear a fire bell?

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(*Door-bell rings loudly again.* MRS. BELDON *and* AUNT SOPHRONIA *begin to straighten up things in the room.* JESSIE *quickly throws the end of the cover over the medicines on the table,* OLIVER *rushes to door at* R., *and* JACK, *in his attempt to help, gets in everybody's way.*)

CURTAIN.

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## ACT II.

*SCENE.—As before. Enter* MR. BELDON *in dressing-gown and slippers, and with cloth around his head.*

MR. B. (*sinking into the easy chair*). Well, I'd give considerable to get out of this scrape without having to confess how I got into it. I'm a victim if ever there was one. It's no mistake now to say that I'm sick. I've been doctored until I feel as bad as any of them. Not content with giving me all sorts of disagreeable stuff, they deluge me with doctors, and to keep peace in the family, I must see every man of them. The queer part of it is that not one of those doctors agreed with any one of the others. Taking their opinions all together, my liver, my heart, my lungs, my kidneys, my stomach, my throat, my head, are in a very serious condition. I walk too much, and I don't walk enough. I need rest, and I need exercise. The house is too warm, and the house is too cold. I ought to go to the mountains, and I ought to go to the seashore. Then to make matters worse they bandage up my head with a cloth soaked in the vilest-smelling stuff I ever came across. I won't have it. (*Takes off cloth and throws it on the floor.*) Good gracious! I certainly am in a condition now to take Longgreen's Bound-to-build-you-up-quick-as-wink. Let's see — what were all those questions? (*Picks up pamphlet and reads.*) Have you a pain in the back; a dull, aching sensation all over your body; a feeling that life is not worth living; an almost insane desire to commit suicide; a belief that your friends have turned against you? Yes, siree, I have every one of them.

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*Enter* CILLY *with letter, which she gives to* MR. BELDON. *She has, also, the inevitable duster.*

CIL. There, sir, it just came. (*Exit, after wiping off dust, which she seems to see on chairs.*)

MR. B. (*opening the letter and reading it*). Ho! ho! it's from Perkins — they're going, after all. Start at six this evening. Didn't tell me before — heard I was very sick, so knew I couldn't go — sorry about it. But I could go, though, if I knew how to manage it. What a simpleton I was to walk, open-eyed, into such a fix as this. (*Begins to walk slowly up and down.*)

*Enter* MRS. BELDON, L.

MRS. B. (*in alarm*). John, why are you wasting your strength in that way?

MR. B. (*taking his seat*). Why, Dr. Smoothington —

MRS. B. I don't care a straw for Dr. Smoothington. Dr. Knowitall told you that what you needed was rest, and you must take it. Dear me! I wish the others had attended to their own affairs, and left you to my care. I can't get you well with so much interference. Besides, I am constantly haunted with the idea that all of those doctors might come at the same time. Luckily they came at different times day before yesterday, but if Dr. Knowitall should meet any of the others right in my own house, how should I feel? John, why didn't you tell the others to stay away?

MR. B. Yes, that's what Sophronia said, and what Oliver said, and even Cilly said it.

MRS. B. Who has the best right, I wonder. At any rate, after seeing the others and getting their opinion, you didn't need to have them again.

MR. B. My goodness! Maria, it was not my idea to have any of them again. I'm not a millionaire.

MRS. B. No, but you're a sick man, and you've got to have a doctor. Dr. Knowitall said he'd come again in a day or two, and I'm afraid the others said the same thing. What if they should meet. (*Sees cloth on floor.*) Why, dear, you've dropped that cloth off your head. (*Picks it up, soaks it again, and binds it around* MR. BELDON'S *head. Then starts toward door at* L.)

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MR. B. (*aside*). I think I see a way of escape. (*To his wife.*) My dear.

MRS. B. Well?

MR. B. Didn't Dr. Knowitall say something about me going to the mountains?

MRS. B. Gracious! no, he said for you to stay right here and rest, and you do it. (*Exit*, L.)

MR. B. (*shaking his head*). It's no mistake to say that the way of the transgressor is hard. Well, I'm glad I had my laugh first, for there's been nothing to laugh at since I started in to be sick.

*Enter* AUNT SOPHRONIA, R.

AUNT S. How are you feeling now, John?

MR. B. There isn't much change, Sophronia.

AUNT S. I'm afraid you're forgetting the doctor's orders. Don't you remember he told you to exercise? Come, let us walk up and down a while and get our blood in circulation. (*Makes him walk rapidlg up and down the room with her several times.*) There, now, I'm sure you feel better. I do. Well, I must leave you, but after a while I'll come back and we'll try it again. (*Exit*, L.)

MR. B. Oh! she will, will she? Well, just a little more of such exercise as that would put me straight to bed. My heart isn't as strong as it was before I began to be doctored. There's one thing about it, if they don't leave me alone, I'll just get desperate and have a sudden and complete recovery. I wish I had the courage to do it at once. Great Scott! why did I fix it so that I couldn't go with Perkins?

*Enter* JESSIE *in out-of-door costume*, R.

JES. Oh, Pa! why don't you have a window open? The fresh, warm air will do you good. (*Throws open window.*) There! isn't that better? I wish you could go with me. My work is all done, and I'm going for a walk. Good-bye. (*Aside.*) I'd just like to know how sick Pa really is. (*Exit*, R.)

MR. B. Bless the girl! if it weren't for creating a great hullabaloo in the family, I would go with her.

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*Enter* OLIVER, R.

OLI. (*in alarm*). Oh, Pa! what are you doing with the window open? (*Closes it.*) Don't you know that Dr. Fussy told you on no account to run the risk of catching cold? It's enough to give you your death. Why, it actually makes me shiver to think of you being here with that window open.

MR. B. Say, my son, where is to-day's paper? Get it for me; will you?

OLI. Oh, Pa! Ma has expressly forbidden it. It's so bad for your head for you to read. (*Shivers.*) I think I shall have to go where there is a fire; you've made it so cold here. (*Exit*, L.)

MR. B. It's my impression that it would do that fellow good to shovel snow for a while. Of course, just at present there isn't any snow to shovel. Perhaps it would be a good idea to let him put in the next ton of coal. Well, I wonder how much further Maria intends to go in her attempt to cure me. Won't let me read, eh? I must think of a way of escape. If only somebody would send for Maria for a few hours, I'm sure I could make the others believe in a sudden recovery. But Maria — somehow, I haven't the courage to try it with her. I'm going to read, any how. Here are some books. (*Begins to look over the books on the table. Sound heard at door. He drops the books and looks frightened.*)

*Enter* JACK.

JACK. Good afternoon, Mr. Beldon. I am glad to find you alone. I hope you are feeling better to-day.

MR. B. (*gruffly*). As well as can be expected, I suppose; but why are you glad to find me alone?

JACK. I wish to speak with you —

MR. B. (*angrily*). Not about my daughter again, sir.

JACK. Yes, about your daughter again, sir. You know, Mr. Beldon, that "faint heart never won fair lady." As I said before, I love Jessie, and Jessie loves me. Would you make us both unhappy? Have you anything against me except that I am going to be a physician?

MR. B. Isn't that enough?

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JACK. It doesn't seem so to me.

MR. B. You're a lot of ignorant, conceited rapscallions, that's what you are. Shows how much you know when four of you told me an entirely different story about my condition.

JACK (*laughing*). Four of me? Why, there's only one of me, and that one hasn't had a chance to say a word yet.

MR. B. (*smiling*). That's true, I'll admit. (*Aside.*) I half like the young fellow, after all. (*To* JACK.) Look here; when you prove to me that you do know a thing or two, I'll consider your case.

JACK. Thank you, sir. (*Aside.*) That's something gained.

*Enter* MRS. BELDON, *hurriedly, at* L.

MRS. B. I just saw Dr. Knowitall coming up the road. I do hope the rest will stay away while he is here.

(*Bell rings. Enter* DR. KNOWITALL *with a consequential air.*)

DR. KNOWITALL. Good afternoon, Mrs. Beldon. How is our patient to-day?

MRS. B. Not much change, I think, doctor.

MR. B. Yes, there is, I'm getttng better. I'll be out — very soon now.

DR. K. (*decidedly*). Oh! no, oh! no. (*To* MRS. BELDON.) You see it takes time. When a man is in his condition he cannot expect to be cured in a day. His is a very peculiar case, and not five physicians in a hundred would have understood it.

(*Bell rings.*)

MRS. B. (*aside*). Dear! dear! what shall I do? That must be one of those other doctors.

*Enter* DR. FUSSY *in a nervous, hurried manner.*

DR. FUSSY. Good afternoon to you all. Ah, doctor! how does it happen that I meet you here?

DR. K. (*stiffly*). I came to see my patient, sir.

DR. F. Ah! you did? But he happens to be my patient, sir.

MRS. B. (*in embarrassment*). Allow me to explain. I

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sent for Dr. Knowitall, and at the same time, my son, not aware of that fact, sent for Dr. Fussy.

DR. K. (*more stiffly than before*). Well, which shall it be?

(*Bell rings. Enter* DR. SMOOTHINGTON, R.)

MRS. B.( *aside*). What shall I do?

(*Bell rings again. Enter* DR. MERRYBONE, *with a smile.*)

DR. F. Well, this is an extraordinary proceeding.

DR. M. (*laughing*). It does look queer. It reminds me of a play I once saw called "Too Much of a Good Thing."

MR. B. (*aside*). I should call it "Too Much of a Bad Thing."

DR. S. (*blandly*). What does it mean, any how? Is there going to be a consultation?

*Enter* JESSIE, R. *She and* JACK *talk together in low tones.*

MR. B. Well, I'll tell you. My family was so anxious about me that each one went off privately and telephoned for a doctor, and each one happened to hit on a different doctor. Now listen; I'll give a good, round sum to the man who'll tell me what is the matter with me. (*Aside.*) I'm safe in offering it, I know.

JACK (*aside to* JESSIE). I can tell him.

JES. What is it?

JACK. Wait.

DR. K. Sir, I am surprised at your levity.

DR. F. So am I.

DR. S. If it were not for the fact that I never allow myself to get out of temper, I should be extremely angry.

DR. F. This is certainly an extraordinary proceeding.

DR. M. It's comical, too.

MR. B. Perhaps it is, but let me tell you, gentlemen, that not one of you has succeeded in hitting the nail on the head yet.

MRS. B. How terrible! they'll certainly be insulted.

DR. F. You astound me.

DR. K. I feel highly insulted. To one in my position a remark like that —

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DR. M. Pshaw! can't you take a joke, man? I can, even when it's against myself.

DR. K. I fail to see any joke to take.

DR. S. I, too, fail to see any joke, and if it weren't for the fact that I never allow myself to get out of temper, I certainly should be angry.

JACK (*going toward* MR. BELDON). May I venture to give an opinion, sir?

MR. B. Suppose we listen to the others first.

DR. K. (*pompously*). Sir, do you suppose I would compromise my dignity by entering into any such prize competition as that? Besides, I have already given my opinion.

DR. F. And so have I.

DR. S. I have nothing more to say. I must study to keep my temper.

DR. M. (*laughing*). Can't sell my cabbage twice, sir.

*Enter* AUNT SOPHRONIA *and* OLIVER. *They look in dismay at all the doctors.*

MR. B. Then, Jack, let us hear from you?

JACK. Well, after a careful study of your case, sir, it is my opinion that day before yesterday there was nothing the matter with you. Now you are suffering from a want of fresh air, and an overdose of doctors and medicines.

MR. B. Good gracious! boy, you've hit it! (*Aside.*) I'm in for it now, and must make the best of it.

JES. (*aside*). How glad I am!

MRS. B. (*sternly*). John, what do you mean?

AUNT S. Do I understand you to say that you have nothing the matter with you?

MRS. B. (*bewildered*). That there was nothing the matter with you?

DR. K. (*indignantly*). Sir, did you have me brought here to make a fool of me? Why didn't you tell me that there was nothing the matter with you?

MR. B. I have already given you to understand that I did not send for any of you. Besides, a doctor is supposed to know when there is nothing the matter with a man. If he can't tell, who can?

DR. M. That's so — that's so — that's a good joke.

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MRS. B. (*with an injured air*). Well, a woman can't tell, any how, and I'd like to know what you meant by saying you were ill when you were not.

MR. B. My dear, if I remember aright, I said nothing of the kind. It was you who jumped at the conclusion that I was ill.

MRS. B. But you let me think so.

MR. B. I suppose I do owe you all an apology for the deception, but the fact is, the rest of the family seemed to get such solid comfort from being on the sick list that I thought I would try it myself.

(*All but* DR. MERRYBONE, JESSIE *and* JACK *look indignant. These three smile.*)

DR. F. I never was so insulted in all my life before.

DR. K. Neither was I. If you will pay me what you owe me, I will go, never to enter your house again.

DR. F. And I, too, sir.

DR. S. And I.

DR. M. Well, it's a great joke.

DR. K. I don't see it.

DR. M. You don't? Four doctors to a man who has nothing the matter with him, and not one of them able to detect the truth? I can see a joke even when it's against myself.

MR. B. (*moving to table, and writing out check for each one*). After all, I'm the one who ought to be in a bad temper. Think of my having to pay four doctors when I'm not ill at all, especially when I didn't send for any one of them.

DR. K. (*stiffly*). Good day. (*Exit*, R.)

DR. F. Good afternoon. (*Exit*, R.)

DR. S. (*with an effort to be pleasant*). Good afternoon to you all. (*Exit*, R.)

DR. M. Well, last but not least, I suppose. Mr. Beldon, the next time you're sick you'd better send for a few more doctors. Good day. (*Exit*, R.)

MRS. B. (*half crying*). Now see what you have done.

MR. B. What, Maria?

MRS. B. You have insulted Dr. Knowitall, and he'll never come into this house again.

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MR. B. All the better for us, my dear.

AUNT S. And Dr. Smoothington, though he is too much of a gentleman to show it, is certainly insulted.

MR. B. All the better for us, Sophronia.

OLI. As for Dr. Fussy —

JES. (*mischievously interrupting*). And as for Dr. Merrybone, though he had to joke about it, I think he's probably mad, too.

MR. B. Pshaw! we're well rid of every one of them.

MRS. B. But, John, if one of us should be sick —

MR. B. We will not suppose it while we are well. Besides, we are going to have, right in the family, a doctor who knows a thing or two — one, also, who can show us the proper way to keep well and strong. Eh, Jack?

(*All look surprised and pleased.*)

JES. (*embracing her father*). Oh, Pa!

JACK (*taking* MR. BELDON'S *hand*). May I say, Oh, Pa, too?

MR. B. Yes, you may; and Jack, I shall not forget that round sum that you certainly won. And now in spite of this doctor who is to be so handy, let us make up our minds that we are not going to be sick. Let us throw away medicines and go out, and allow the sun and fresh air to have a chance with us. As Jack said about me, so I believe about the rest of you — you are suffering from an overdose of doctors and medicine. Come, I'm ready to be well if the rest of you are. I'm going right out, too, but before I go, I want to see that everybody else is out of the house. Maria, I know you haven't stepped beyond the front door-sill for a week; Sophronia, to my certain knowledge, you havent taken a breath of fresh air for a month; Oliver, I don't know when you have had a bit of out-door exercise — take a spin on your wheel.

JACK. What say the ladies to a drive in the park?

JES. (*going to* JACK *and taking his hand*). Oh, Jack! that would be delightful!

MRS. B. It would be a pleasure, I am sure.

AUNT S. You make me long for it. I don't know when I have been so ambitious about going out.

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MR. B. (*smiling*). There! you see, you are all being doctored in spite of me.

*Enter* CILLY *with duster in hand.*

MR. B. Cilly, what are you going to do?

CIL. Dust, sir.

MR. B. No, you're not. Leave dusting alone for to-day, and go out somewhere for a while. Good gracious! I never before saw such an indefatigable duster as you are. Why, there can't be a speck of dust left anywhere. Besides, you haven't taken an afternoon out in an age. No wonder you have poor days. Don't you see that you can accomplish more if you keep yourself in good condition? There is no economy in working all the time.

CIL. (*looking surprised*). My! but the man's better already. I just knew that Dr. Merrybone with his jokes and medicines could cure him.

MR. B. Of course, I'm better, Cilly. So are we all of us, and we're all going out, too. Come, I'll give every one of you just half an hour to get out of the house, and then I'll follow.

(*All but* MR. BELDON *start, with a smile, toward door at* R.)

MR. B. (*looking at his watch*). Well, I've lost that trip — couldn't do it now — but if I may entertain a hope that we have all been cured of our various little ailments, I think I'll manage to enjoy home-life for the rest of my vacation.

CURTAIN.

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